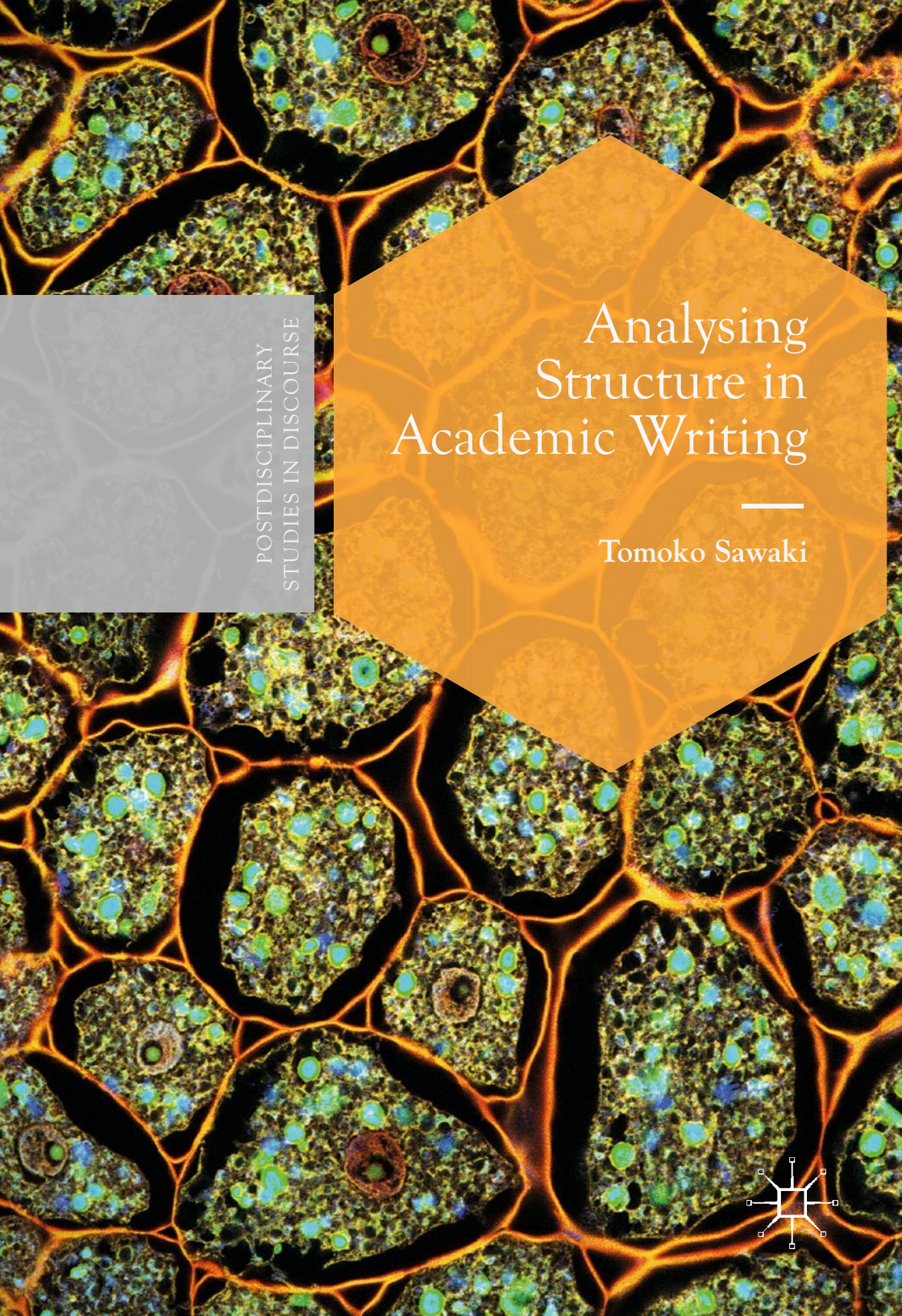
POSTDISCIPLINARY
STUDIES IN DISCOURSE
Analysing
Structure in
Academic Writing
Tomoko Sawaki

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Analysing Structure in Academic Writing

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Preface

Unlike many researchers and practitioners in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) who have majored in education or applied linguistics, I came to this field from a literary analysis background. I was doing French literary analysis from a range of perspectives related to modernism, structuralism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism. Genre analysis on world folktale has always been one of my favourite subjects. Thus, I was quite confident when I started genre analysis in academic writing. Soon, however, I found that something was wrong. The analytical model for academic writing that was recommended to me didn't work. The structure analytical models in academic writing studies, I found out, were from formalism; they cemented form and content, and that is why they don't work.

The major models used in academic writing studies are reminiscent of Vladimir Propp's folktale structure analysis. Propp's framework published in Russia in 1928 was intended to be a structuralist one; however, as Claude Lévi-Strauss criticised, it was more formalistic than structuralistic. A structuralist analytical model was established by Algirdas Julius Greimas in 1966 with the publication of *Sémantique Structurale: Recherche de Méthode*. Structuralism, in contrast to formalism, rejects cementing between form and content and instead places analytical emphasis on the relationships between a text's elements. Structuralist analytical models are

also characterised by flexibility: they can take into account new instances of genre, since the model does not specify form and content.

Once I identified the cause of the problems, I tried to establish a structuralist model for academic writing so that diverse instances of academic discourse could be analysed. The University of New South Wales, where I started the project for my Ph.D. study, supported the originality of this project. Not everything, however, has gone smoothly. I had to face a small number of difficulties to present this work more globally to academia. Although many researchers found an integrative work such as this one interesting, it is hard for researchers to fully understand the new model based on theories of different disciplines unless a book-length work is made available. Research articles have a limited space and cannot fully convince the research community of the underlying theories.

Also, I soon found out that the terms *formalism* and *structuralism* are used synonymously in applied linguistics. As a consequence, formalistic discourses or practices are criticised as 'structuralism'. This confusion seems to be in line with the confusion in structure analytical models so far established for academic writing structure analysis: intending to produce structuralism but remaining formalism. These issues are due to the confusion.

Although interdisciplinary work is increasingly encouraged, researchers rarely, in practice, have a familiarity with discourse structure studies outside of their own traditions. This book is radically interdisciplinary in that it integrates different approaches developed in different traditions across different disciplines. Given the time when the Greimassian model in structuralism was established in Europe, it is understandable that many researchers who value centrality and disciplinarity might react instantly and believe that 'this study uses a model from half a century ago' (referring to the Greimassian model in structuralism) instead of using newer models that have a wealth of research (referring to the models developed in EAP). Sure, the models so far established in EAP are newer, and a lot of researchers are interested in them and have done a lot of work using them, but these newer models were established without an awareness of the history of formalism and structuralism that was developed outside of North America. In fact, the newer models in EAP are formalism in nature and hence are more outdated than the Greimassian model that fixed the issues of formalistic generic structure models.

In this book, I try to resolve the confusion concerning formalism and structuralism in a familiar way for researchers and practitioners of EAP. A flexible binary generic structure model for academic writing is presented. Further innovation is made in the analysis of generic structure components by integrating George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's metaphor analysis method, so that the model can account for cultural and ideological patterns that structure our abstract thinking. Using these integrations, this book has established a structure analytical model that can take into account linguistic, cognitive, and pragmatic aspects of genre.

My ultimate mission is to provide a more autonomous role for EAP. Academic writing studies so far have been rather obedient to the institutional purposes helping students and researchers to be able to produce work that meets institutional criteria. Although the practices help students and researchers create publishable work in the short run, they do not help more global and more crucial academic purposes in the long run. The practice of encouraging students and researchers from diverse backgrounds to write like a mainstream central researcher runs the risk of cementing the development of science and academic activities. On one hand, academia explicitly values diversity, inclusion, and interdisciplinary collaborations, but, on the other hand, diverse students and researchers are limited to disciplinary practices under the name of personal and institutional achievement and success.

Instead, this book proposes the active involvement of EAP in changing the practices of academia. For this ultimate purpose, it is vital, first of all, that EAP be able to analyse and implement diverse instances of genre. It may then be possible for EAP to become independent from institutional power and play an active role in contributing to the development of diverse academic activities.

I hope this book will solve many discrepancies between theory and practice and help many researchers to conduct research in structure analysis in academic writing. I am also hoping that, by reading this book, more people will find the idea that text can change context interesting, rather than text always being assumed to obey context, and will start acting to make a difference.

Acknowledgements

This book grew out of the work that I completed for my Ph.D. degree at the University of New South Wales. I would like to express my gratitude to the staff members of the School of the Arts and Media, particularly Louise Ravelli, my supervisor during my Ph.D. candidature.

I acknowledge my gratitude to Jordan Zlatev, professor of cognitive semiotics at Lund University, Sweden, and the editor-in-chief of the *Public Journal of Semiotics*, for providing me with insightful comments during the review process of my paper, *The CARS model and binary opposition structure* (Sawaki 2014a), which inspired me to develop a book-length generic structure model for academic writing that is based on the foundations of cognitive linguistics as well as semiotics and structuralism.

My gratitude goes to editorial members at Palgrave Macmillan, Rebecca Brennan, Esme Chapman, Chloe Fitzsimmons, and Elizabeth Forrest, for their patience and thorough support in creating this book. My gratitude also goes to Ulaganathan Abirami for his thorough editing and proofreading work.

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Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, Brian, and my children, Samantha, Phillip, and Bradley, for their continuous support and encouragement at home.

Sydney, February 2016 Tomoko Sawaki

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1

Introduction

In 1989, Tatsuo Motokawa, a prominent biologist, wrote in a scientific journal, *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, concerning variations in scientific writing:

> I had always regarded science as a universal and believed there are no differences in science at all between countries. But I was wrong. People with different cultures think in different ways, and therefore their science also may well be different. (Motokawa 1989, p. 489)

Despite the rapid development in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) research today, we have as yet found a practical and unproblematic way to manage 'differences' in academic writing. Students from various backgrounds write differently, and minority students struggle to write the kind of essays that can result in good marks. Researchers around the globe likewise grapple. The struggle they experience may sometimes be the result of their genuinely immature research skills, but in other cases, it is simply that their writing conforms to a norm that is different from the dominant one. Not only cultures that emerge from different nations but also a wide range of ideological differences create different norms

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in writing. Religions, genders, beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds trigger individuals to 'think in different ways'.

This is an issue caused by inadequate approaches to differences. Although we have become aware of differences, we do not know how to deal with them. Finding a difference tends to lead to over-generalising based on the attribute of a group. This leads to an attempt to change minor attributes to major ones in order for minorities to succeed. Regrettably, this has been happening in English academic writing research and pedagogy and the research community has yet to provide an effective and appropriate solution to the situation.

This has been the case in structure analysis in academic writing research. Structure analysis has been one of the most fruitful and highly disputed areas of research in academic writing studies. Diverse norms have brought complexities to the structure analysis of academic writing. Discrepancies between theories and analytical frameworks have brought further complexities. These factors will be discussed in the subsequent sections by reviewing academic writing structure analytical approaches that are currently used in academic writing studies.

This chapter presents an overview of the primary aim of this book: to provide a new analytical model for academic writing structure that can solve the complexities. By stating this, I do not mean that I am creating something completely new, since the generic structure model this book presents depends firmly on well-established theories, which have been little considered within academic discourse analysis literature in the past. These include the prototype theory, originating with the psychology research of Eleanor Roche and further developed by semanticist/cognitive linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson, and the structuralist theories, represented by anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and folklorist/semiotician Algirdas Julien Greimas. These foundations from across the disciplines enable this book to approach academic writing structures in globalising, diverse, and complex academic settings in a way different from the past. The approach does not just indicate differences; it also finds overlaps and this enables analysing academic writing structures without over-generalising instances of genre and without assimilating minor instances into major ones.

To achieve this, this book draws on literature, theories, and frameworks that are not limited to one discipline but that range from linguistics,

semiotics, anthropology, cognitive sciences, and so on. Therefore, it is a post-disciplinary attempt to study discourse and enables an integration of theories and approaches beyond disciplinary boundaries. This was difficult to do under the restriction of disciplinary walls that deemed the traditions outside of the wall irrelevant for the reason that they were outside. To provide an overview of this attempt, this introductory chapter will, first of all, present a concise history of academic writing research traditions, followed by a short summary of how this book will resolve the complexities that arise within the structure analysis in the academic writing research tradition, which is known as genre analysis.

1.1 Three Traditions of Genre Analysis

As Hyon (1996) identified, genre analysis in academic writing research is divided into roughly three traditions: English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and EAP, Sydney School of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and New Rhetoric. Despite differences reviewed in the subsequent sections, all three traditions can be recognised as socio-pragmatic discourse analysis, as they consider text in relation to social practices and practical, purposeful mediators. I overview each tradition before presenting the proposed theoretical grounds for the new model. This is because the theoretical grounds of the new model are closely linked to the issues posed by the three traditions of genre analysis. The issues relate to the discrepancies between theory and analytical practices. More specifically, the issues have to do with the ambiguity of identifying generic structure components,[1] in which the theory is incongruent with the identification criterion for generic structure components. This incongruity between genre theory and analytical practices directly relates to the unresolved issue, which was pointed out most notably by Paltridge, that despite the wealth of research, approaches to academic discourse structures are still not successful in integrating social and cognitive aspects of genre (Paltridge 1995).

Structure analysis in academic writing studies has developed rather independently from other traditions of structure analysis in other written genres,

[1] In this book, I refer to structuring units generally as generic structure components.

such as literary studies, in which the mainstream structure analysis has been developed under the influence of semiotics and structuralism. Genre analysis in academic writing, on the other hand, presents a formalistic appearance.

One type of structure analysis in academic writing studies is macro-structure analysis, which investigates sectional structure of research articles (RAs) or chapter structure in theses, namely introduction-method-results-discussion (IMRD) structure (macro-structure) (Swales 1990). Another type of structure analysis describes smaller components that structure sections of RAs or chapters of a thesis/book (micro-structure). The approach this book proposes does not distinguish between macro- and micro-structures; that is, it does not rely on formalistic structures of academic writing. This means that this new approach to academic writing structure is trans-structural; it can be applied throughout a text without relying on formal divisions, such as method, results and discussion sections. In this book, however, the majority of excerpts used for explaining how the new model works are from introductory sections/chapters. This is because, as will be shown, introduction parts tend to contain variations of research justifications, making them good sites for the structure analysis that aims to establish a model that can take into account diverse academic writing structural realisations.

1.1.1 ESP and EAP Traditions

The most widely applied genre analysis approach is arguably the one developed within the ESP and EAP traditions. Both ESP and EAP are quite pragmatic in their orientations, but EAP is more open to linguistic and ideological perspectives. Research in EAP is more relevant to this book since it emerged from ESP so that pedagogical orientations for the purpose of students/researchers can be highlighted. It has been famously formulated by Swales (1990, pp. 45–56) that genre orients communicative purpose. That is, the link between shared communicative purposes among the members of the discourse community and the formation of genre has been highlighted.

Swales also highlighted a feature of genre by drawing on Armstrong et al. (1983) integration of the notions of prototypicality (Rosch 1975)

and family resemblance (Wittgenstein 1958). These concepts will be fully explained in Chap. 2. This integration, together with the deployment of the prototype theory, was, in my view, among the most innovative in genre analysis. This integration, however, was not fully explored in the identification of generic structure components. Although it was proposed that with this integration it would be theoretically possible to categorise not only typical but also peripheral instances of genre, in practice it was not. Although instances of genre could be identified with this integration theoretically, the integration was not applied to the analysis of components of genre that form structures, leaving a formalistic view to generic structure. This resulted in the inflexible formalistic models that are unable to analyse new instances of generic structure components.

The generic structure analytical framework represented by the Create-A-Research-Space (CARS) model (Swales 1990) has been widely applied as it well described the RA introductory structures written by Anglophone researchers. It has also been useful for minority students and researchers to learn to write like a mainstream researcher. However, presenting structures of RA as a fixed monolith, without reflecting the flexibility that the integration of the prototype and family resemblance may achieve, was inadequate. The CARS model, for example, is rather formalistic, being made up of three moves with metaphorically described content: Move 1 is 'establishing territory', Move 2 is 'establishing a niche', and Move 3 is 'occupying a niche'. The rhetorical function of Move 1 is to provide a background for research. Move 1 is made up of steps such as 'claiming centrality', 'making topic generalization(s)', and 'reviewing items of previous research'. The rhetorical function of Move 2 is to point out a gap in research, made up of steps such as 'counter-claiming', 'indicating gap', 'question raising', and 'continuing a tradition'. In Move 3, where research is presented, the steps include 'questioning purpose', 'announcing present research', 'announcing principal findings', and 'indicating research article structure'.

The apparently fixed generic structure of the model has caused complexities in actual analysis as well as at pedagogic settings. Studies (Lewin et al. 2001; Lorés 2004; Paltridge 1994) pointed out a divide between theory and practice in this regard. That is, despite the theoretical assurance on genre categorisations, the infinite classifying of generic structure instances 'which just don't seem to fit the generic descriptions'

(Cope and Kalantzis 1993, p. 12) continues in practice. In real academic settings where students write for degrees or publications, these issues can be linked to real risks. This is acutely exemplified with the case of what Hodge (1995) called the postmodern turn in humanities theses, where he cautioned that new types of academic discourse represented by subjective, personal theses that deny the traditional objectivity in academic discourse 'run the risk of being judged by inappropriate criteria' (p. 35). By the inappropriate criteria, Hodge refers to the traditional mainstream discoursal criteria that are pre-set in the mind of theses examiners, namely gatekeepers. Being based on the mainstream rhetorical structures, the CARS model contains a risk of being used as a solid grounding for new kinds of texts which are actually a resulting instance of genre evolution to be deemed as a failure simply because it does not meet the old fixed criteria. The CARS model, therefore, does not serve as a flexible model that can take account of evolving research genres.

The issue here is that, although the CARS model reflects the mainstream typical English academic writing introductory sections, the genre is constantly changing. A pre-fixed model falls short in analysing the evolving genre. One consequence of the inflexibility of the model was that it had to keep adding new steps in order to analyse all the new instances, causing a never-ending expansion of the model, as pointed out in the quote by Cope and Kalantzis (1993). This is particularly true in thesis genre, where wide structural variations tend to occur (Bunton 2005). Not only the external variational expansions but also the internal complex structures of RA introductions have been reported. Samraj (2002) observed the recycling of moves; for example, a Move 3 element that introduces the methodology of new research tends to have a CARS structure inside it, constituted by such elements as asserting background and relevance of the methodology (Move 1) and pointing out problems with the methodology or other methodologies (Move 2). This seems understandable in academic writing introductions which need to justify most of the aspects of research designs. Consequently, however, the structure of introductory sections tends to be much more complex in reality than the simple CARS model suggests.

The lack of a flexible generic structure model can heighten the issue in an increasingly diverse academia. Hyland (2004), among many others,

indicated that academic writing is diverse especially among disciplines. Bhatia (1997, 2002) reported the phenomenon of genre mixing, in which mixing of generic values constitutes a text. Although a wide variation in actual academic writing has been reported, the fixed model cannot take into account the variations, other than adding more steps and moves to the three-move model.

To my knowledge, the emerging element of personal narratives, which is often present in new types of humanities thesis introductions (Hodge 1995; Hood 2006), has not been analysed by using the CARS model. Since the CARS model is fixed with three moves, new types of generic structure elements that are discovered do not fit into any rhetorical purposes described in the three-move model and hence they naturally have no place in it. The result is that new instances are left unanalysed.

The lack of reliable identification criteria for move components also makes the complexities and diversity in academic writing problematic for researchers to analyse using the CARS model. Lewin et al. (2001, p. 18) pointed out that the model combines cognitive and lexicogrammatical/semantic criteria for the identification of move components. For example, as Lewin et al. noted, the identification of Move 2 (establishing the niche) relies on either lexicogrammatical cues such as negation in the determiner or rhetorical function such as logical conclusions. Lorés (2004, p. 282) argued that move identification lacks uniform standards since it relies on both cognitive and lexicogrammatical cues. Swales (2004, p. 229) himself admitted that both move identifications and boundary drawings between moves lack criterial standards in uniformity, being 'established by a mixed bag of criteria'. These issues are summarised as essentially intuitive analysis in that, practically speaking, analysts are left to classify generic structure elements according to what arose in their minds when reading the text (Crookes 1986; Lorés 2004).

Hence, the research practices of the ESP/EAP tradition of generic structures represented by the CARS model need much improvement. The methods must take into account variations in genre so that studies can keep up with the ever increasingly diverse academic world. It may simply be due to the tendency that emerging genre instances are unanalysed with the CARS model that the prevailing understanding in the field of research using introductory portions of academic writing structured with

three moves represented by the CARS model remains. A flexible generic structure model that does not cement form and content combined with thorough applications of the prototype theory and family resemblance is necessary to keep up with the changing genre.

1.1.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics Tradition

SFL started with Halliday's pioneering work that views language as a social semiotic system. Underlying the SFL theory of genre is the influence of Malinowski (1923, 1935), who considered that the social contexts of interaction are stratified into two levels: 'context of situation' and 'context of culture'. SFL academic genre analysis has developed mainly within the 'Sydney School', most notably by Martin (1992). The definition of genre is set as a staged, goal-oriented, and social process (Martin 2009, p. 13), and the understanding is that cultures institutionalise ways of achieving goals (Martin 1992; Martin and Rothery 1986).

SFL genre analysis is represented by the description of schematic sequencing structure. This approach was derived from Labov and Waletzky (1967), who identified narrative elements such as orientation, complication, evaluation and resolution and found that descriptions of events are typically followed by an evaluation element. Similarly, Sydney School genre analysis identifies elements such as recount, account, and so on, often referred to as genre types, key genres, or micro-genres. Describing the sequencing and the configurations of genre types in a text constitutes the main aspect of SFL genre analysis. It will be useful, therefore, to set genre types as the starting point of reviewing SFL genre analysis in academic writing. This is not only because genre types are highlighted in SFL genre analysis but also because one cause of SFL genre research, which has not yet sufficiently uncovered the relationship between social and structural aspects of genre, is the inadequate semiotic view in analysing genre types. That is, the meaning-making processes that arise from the relationship between generic structure components have not been considered in SFL genre analysis.

First, the sequencing, or staging, of genre types that constitute text, is one important aspect of SFL genre analysis. Originally, it was Vladimir

Propp's influential generic structure analysis in folktales (Propp 1968) which showed the similarity in sequences of events in a majority of folktales (Propp's work will be discussed in detail in Chap. 2). The tradition of sequential genre component analysis was taken over by Labov and Waletzky (1967), which, as mentioned earlier, influenced the genre analysis method in the Sydney School tradition. Swales's model also assumes moves to linearly progress; hence, sequential analysis of generic structure components is quite common. Similarly to Propp's generic structure analysis that associated a specific linear generic components progression with a specific genre, the Sydney School approach relates the sequence of stages that constitute text to a specific genre of the text. Importantly, such genre types are termed 'micro-genre' in the more recent models (Martin and Rose 2007, 2008). Furthermore, a configuration of several micro-genres, or sometimes one micro-genre, is termed a 'macro-genre', which denotes the genre of the whole text such as news reports and classroom discussions. The understanding of a genre (macro-genre) as a configuration of micro-genres makes it possible to comprehensively consider what ESP/EAP has called a 'mixed genre'. As mentioned earlier, studies within ESP/EAP have found that many academic discourses contain apparently non-academic types of discourse (genre-mix) (Bhatia 1995, 1997, 2004). In contrast, Martin and Rose (2008, p. 242) pointed out that the concept of genre-mix is itself contradictory. In Martin and Rose's approach to genre, genres do not mix; it is the configurations of micro-genres that make a genre.

Although the descriptions of micro-genres have been found to be useful both for students writing research and at school literacy educational settings (Coffin 2006, 2010; Feez 1998, 2002; Macken-Horarik 2002, Veel 1997; among others), the configurations of micro-genres have not been adequately discussed in terms of their meaning-making mechanisms, namely the relationships between micro-genres and how the relationships function to make meaning. This may appear somewhat perplexing to some, given that SFL theoretically is built upon semiotics, the science that explores relationships between elements that make meaning. A text analytical perspective that combines structure and semantics (bi-planar perspective) is what Hjelmslev (1961) aimed for. (The bi-planar perspective will be discussed fully in Chap. 3). One factor that the bi-planar perspective has not extended to the generic structure level